

**Transmitting the memory of the Holocaust to the Australian Public: The
cultivation of prosthetic memory in the Sydney Jewish Museum.**

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Transmitting the memory of the Holocaust to the Australian Public: The cultivation of prosthetic memory in the Sydney Jewish Museum.

In 1992 the Sydney Jewish Museum (SJM) was opened, transforming the NSW Jewish Memorial Hall from a cultural focal point and meeting place of the Sydney Jewish community, into a liminal site of cultural interaction between Sydney Jewry and the broader Australian public. As a result, Avril Alba, the former education manager of the SJM, argues that the SJM came to represent a “physical and cultural meeting place where Holocaust history and Australian Jewish history is preserved, displayed and conveyed to the broader Australian public... a de facto site for conveying Jewish memory”.¹ In recent decades scholars have begun to consider the processes Alba references, with Jewish museums and memorials around the world being considered as ‘memory active’, liminal sites in which a range of collective and individual Holocaust memories are produced and conveyed beyond the margins of the Jewish community.² Within this discussion is a growing body of scholarship surrounding the relationship between the cultivation of museum-goer experience via the conveyance of authentic survivor experience and testimony and the subsequent production of what Alison Landsberg terms “prosthetic memory”.³ Given that the SJM seeks to

¹ Avril Alba, “Integrity and Relevance: Shaping Holocaust Memory at the Sydney Jewish Museum” *A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought* 54 (2005): 108.

² See particularly: Alison Landsberg, “America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory: Towards a Radical Politics of Empathy,” *New German Critique* 71 (1997): 63-86. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Susan A. Crane, “Memory, Distortion and History in the Museum,” *History and Theory* 36 (1997): 44-63; Susan A. Crane, *Museums and Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Sybil Milton, Ira Nowinski, *In Fitting Memory: The Art and Politics of Holocaust Memorials* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).

³ The concept of ‘prosthetic memory’ was inaugurated by Alison Landsberg in 1995 in her article “Prosthetic Memory: *Total Recall* and *Blade Runner*”, and is defined as an alternative memories which do not come from an individual’s lived experience, but which are produced via exposure to

“*imbed* Holocaust memory with both integrity and relevance into Australian public life [emphasis added]”⁴ through the conveyance of Jewish history and survivor memory and testimony, it is befitting to consider the operation of Landsberg’s prosthetic memory paradigm in relation to the design, curation and tour experience of the SJM.

In order to investigate this relationship, this paper will first define the scope of prosthetic memory for this paper, through a consideration of Landsberg’s treatment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and Gary Weissman’s notion of the ‘non-witness’.⁵ Following this will be a brief discussion of the SJM’s intention to imbed Holocaust memory beyond the margins of the Jewish community and the Holocaust narrative such memory promotes. This paper will then turn to a final three-part discussion of the production and promotion of prosthetic memory via the curation, design and tour experience of the SJM. From these discussions it will be argued that the production and promotion of prosthetic Holocaust memory within museum-goers is of central import to the operations of the SJM. An intention to imbed a prosthetic Holocaust memory beyond the margins of the Sydney Jewish community in order to preserve a Jewish Holocaust narrative in the face of an ever dwindling survivor generation.

the memories and experiences of others. Alison Landsberg, “Prosthetic Memory: *Total Recall* and *Blade Runner*,” *Body & Society* 1 (1995): 175-189.

⁴ Alba, “Integrity and Relevance,” 109.

⁵ Landsberg, “America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory: Towards a Radical Politics of Empathy,” *New German Critique* 71 (1997): 63-86; Gary Weissman *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Prosthetic Memory Production

In order to examine the operation of the promotion and production of prosthetic memory at the SJM, it is necessary to first define the scope of prosthetic memory for this paper. Whilst Alison Landsberg's prosthetic memory thesis will be of prime importance in this discussion, this paper will also consider Gary Weissman's notion of memory transfer from survivor testimony to the 'non-witness' for its additional insights into the operation of what Landsberg terms prosthetic memory.

Landsberg's prosthetic memory thesis, first published in 1995, is defined as an "alternative living memory produced in those who did not live through the event" via exposure to the memories and experiences of others.⁶ Whilst originally applied theoretically to representations of memory prosthesis in film, Landsberg has more recently applied the paradigm to a consideration of public Holocaust memory production at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).⁷ Landsberg's consideration of the USHMM converges on the production of prosthetic memory via the physical and sensuous experiences of the museum, where by prosthetic memories are formed through an empathetic interaction between museum-goer and the objects and spaces of the museum. Landsberg suggests that prosthetic memories of the Holocaust can be formed in museum-goers who have no 'authentic' link to the events depicted via an emotional exposure to personal, and relatable Holocaust experiences which are often shocking and horrific.⁸ Central to Landsberg's application of the prosthetic

⁶ Landsberg, "Prosthetic Memory," 175-189; Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory," 66.

⁷ See: Ibid, 63-86; Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁸ Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory," 66.

memory paradigm to the USHMM is the sensuous immersion of the museum-goer within the transferential and liminal space of the museum, “in which people are invited to enter into experiential relationships with events through which they themselves did not live”.⁹ The USHMM primarily achieves this through strategic curation, which positions the museum-goer to engage emotionally with the displays and exhibition environments. A prime example is the floor entitled “The Final Solution”, a darkened level in which the traditional mobility of a museum is ‘disconcertingly restricted’ to a boardwalk-like walkway of uneven cobblestones, transplanted from the Warsaw ghetto.¹⁰ Within this eerie space, the museum-goer passes by a series of mundane objects once owned by Holocaust victims which testify as evidence to the atrocities in the absence of their owners.¹¹ These objects offer the illusion of unmediated proximity to the events portrayed, particularly when the walkway leads the museum-goer *through* a boxcar used to transport Jews from Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka in 1942/43.¹² Emerging from the boxcar the museum-goer enters the world of the death camp signalled by the ‘Holocaust aesthetic’ of piles of confiscated personal belongings. Here the museum-goer’s emotional experience of the museum reaches a climax stimulating the mimetic faculty of the viewer via the familiar and relatable nature of the objects. Mimesis, posited by Walter Benjamin in 1933, is the human capacity to cognitively recognise and produce similarity,¹³ a process similar to empathy, in which the mind comprehends “something by means of its likeness” forming “a palpable, sensuous, connection between the

⁹ Ibid, 66.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 132.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 132.

¹² Ibid, p. 133.

¹³ Walter Benjamin, “On the Mimetic Faculty,” *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1978), p. 333.

very body of the perceiver and the perceived".¹⁴ The museum-goer, in this mimetic and empathetic engagement, draws upon their own archive of experiences in order to comprehend the experience of the owner of the object, and as a result gains a prosthetic relationship with a Holocaust memory associated with the object, and an empathetic connection to the imagined owner of the object.¹⁵ For, as Landsberg states, at the moment of mimetic engagement with the confiscated shoe piles, "we experience the shoes as *their* shoes – which could very well be *our* shoes – we feel our own shoes on our feet".¹⁶ Not only has the museum-goer experienced what it would 'feel like' to walk the streets of the Warsaw ghetto and enter the gloom of the boxcar forming a sensual prosthetic memory, they now also, through the empathetic and mimetic engagement with a familiar object adopt an memory of what it may have been like for the object owner, constructing a prosthetic memory of the object in its absent context.¹⁷

In addition to Landsberg's above application of prosthetic memory to the USHMM, Gary Weissman in *Fantasies of Witnessing* (2004) posited the category of the 'non-witness', a term used to refer to those who have had no first-hand experience of the Holocaust, having only a *received* memory and knowledge of the Holocaust.¹⁸ In this work Weissman, like Landsberg, considers the issue of

¹⁴ Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 21.

¹⁵ Landsberg's use of the term 'empathy' is specific. Landsberg notes that while the notion of sympathy presupposes an initial likeness between subjects, empathy comes from a position of difference. Empathy is then, the bridging of difference between individuals, allowing one individual to comprehend and then share the emotional experience of another. Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory," 81-82.

¹⁶ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, p. 135.

¹⁷ This construction of a prosthetic memory following an empathetic engagement with an object, is not only informed by the museum text that accompanies an object, but is also significantly informed by the memory archives of the viewer thus being a personal amalgam of the images the museum-goer has seen from holocaust photographs or documentaries, and even films such as *Schindler's List* or the *Pianist*. Ibid, p. 137.

¹⁸ Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*. It should be noted that Weissman does not use the term 'prosthetic memory', instead suggesting that what Landsberg refers to is better understood via the term 'fantasy', as for Weissman, the term prosthetic memory does not adequately express the

what it means to transmit the experience of the events of the Holocaust to those who come to the Holocaust as outsiders. However, unlike Landsberg who focuses primarily on memory transfer via sensuous experience and 'object empathy', Weissman adds an additional possibility to the prosthetic transmission of Holocaust memory to the non-witness – that of the non-witness' imaginative identification with the personal, oral testimony of survivor experience.¹⁹ Here Weissman argues that an 'experience' of the holocaust can only be realized "in fantasy, in fantasies of witnessing the Holocaust for oneself" which stem from the non-witness' desire to "be there" and feel what it was like, imagining themselves into an event through their empathetic identification with the testimony of others.²⁰ Through his discussion of non-witness responses to Elie Wiesel's *Night*, videotaped Holocaust testimonies, and the films *Shoah* (1985) and *Schindler's List* (1993) it becomes evident that the non-witness may adopt a prosthetic memory of an experience that is not their own, imagining themselves into the situation related to them via the authentic survivor testimony. However, this imagining will only ever be a mediated representation, for it "is not that the Holocaust is unrepresentable, but that it is *only representable*".²¹ For, as Wiesel would suggest, without a direct experience the Holocaust one can never fully comprehend it nor fathom a survivors true Holocaust experience.

unreality of the non-witness' imagined identification with survivor experience. See Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*, pp. 219-220.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 22-23.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 4, 21-22; This desire on behalf of the non-witness to experience 'what it was like' has likewise been raised by Susan A. Crane in her work on the interplay between history and memory in a case study of national museums in Germany and the US, Crane notes that museum-goers in particular not only seek knowledge of a history, but also "desire to understand experience with reference to time, change and memory". Crane "Memory, Distortion and History in the Museum," 45.

²¹ Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*, 209.

Thus, the prosthetic memory of the non-witness' will always be removed from the actuality of the horrors suffered by the Holocaust victim. It is clear then, that in addition to Landsberg's discussion of the USHMM, in which prosthetic memory transfer occurs via the sensuous experience of a transferential space or object empathy, Weissman posits that such memory transfer can also occur via an imaginative and empathetic identification with a testimonial relaying of Holocaust experience from survivor to non-witness.

The combination of Landsberg's discussion of the operation of prosthetic memory transfer at the USHMM and Weissman's exploration of the transfer of Holocaust experience from survivor to non-witness will provide this paper with a paradigm in which to explore the ways in which the Sydney Jewish Museum through its curation, design and tour experience, seeks to produce and promote a prosthetic memory of the Holocaust within museum-goers. This paradigm provides that prosthetic memory transfer can occur via three primary means. Firstly, memory transfer can occur via the sensuous experience of a transferential space. Secondly, memory transfer can occur via an empathetic engagement with a tangible object. Finally, memory transfer can occur via the adoption of a survivors' memory of the Holocaust through a imaginative and empathetic engagement with their testimony. Hence, through a consideration of the curation, design and tour experience of the SJM in conjunction with these three primary means of prosthetic memory transfer, it will become evident that the production of a prosthetic memory of the Holocaust within museum-goers is an intentional and central aspect of the SJM's exhibition program which seeks produce alternative living memory in those who did not live through the Holocaust in order to preserve its memory into the future.

The Production of Prosthetic Memory and Memory Narratives at the SJM

From its inception in 1992, the SJM was intended to be a liminal space of cultural interaction between Sydney Jewry and the broader Australian public. Importantly, as above, Alba notes that the SJM is self-conceived as a site for imbedding Holocaust memory beyond the margins of its own Jewish community,²² with the original catalogue stating that the museum was to be “a tribute to survivors, *perpetuating* the truth through their eyes and in their words [emphasis added]”.²³ Moreover, similar to the USHMM, the intention to curate a Holocaust ‘experience’ within the museum was also clear from its inception with museum curator, Kylie Winkworth stating in the year of the museum’s opening, that “I hope visitors will feel overwhelmed by the humane quality of the survivors’ stories”.²⁴ Further reinforcing the museum’s intention to provide an emotional and empathetic experience of Jewish Holocaust memory, elements that Landsberg notes above form prosthetic memory, is the architect Michael Burés, who described the museum design as a living organism which was to encourage a corporeal experience within museum-goers.²⁵ It is thus apparent that from the outset the museum-goers’ emotional, experiential and empathetic engagement with survivor testimony was central to the intention of the museum’s exhibition program: an engagement directed towards the production of prosthetic memories of Holocaust experience within the museum-goer in order to preserve such memory beyond the confines of the Jewish community and survivor generation. This intention to promote prosthetic memory

²² Alba, “Integrity and Relevance,” 109, 111.

²³ Gael Hammer, *Sydney Jewish Museum Catalogue* (Sydney: Sydney Jewish Museum, 1992), p. 7.

²⁴ Kylie Winkworth quoted in Lani Zelazne, “Outlook on life was changed,” *Australian Jewish News*, November 13, 1992.

²⁵ Michael Burés quoted in “The Sydney Jewish Museum,” *Design World* 28 (1994): 30-31.

production in order to preserve Holocaust memory beyond the Jewish community has evidently remained central to the work of the SJM, with one Child Survivor guide, George Sternfeld, stating in 2012:

When talking to visitors I feel connected to humanity. They empathise with stories from survivors of the Holocaust. In turn, I feel I am planting seed in the young minds for better humanity into the future.²⁶

Here we can see clear parallels to Weissman's above discussion of the operation of empathy forming a memory link to an event, as well as a conscious intention to imbed the 'seed' of memory into the minds of the museum-goer in order to preserve Holocaust memory beyond the Jewish community as the survivor generation fades. Yet it is important to note, as has been made evident in the work of James E. Young, that within each Holocaust museum and memorial "a different Holocaust is remembered".²⁷ Within the SJM a clear memory narrative is observable, one dominated by an emphasis on the uniqueness of the personal experience of Sydney *Jewish* Holocaust survivors. As Judith Berman notes, the SJM promotes a particularly narrow Holocaust narrative, which to a large degree excludes reference to other victims of the Holocaust, emphasising an intentionalist reading of the Holocaust, where by it was always the personal intention of Hitler, growing from his pre-1914 anti-Semitism, to direct the policies of the Third Reich towards the Final solution.²⁸ In doing so Berman

²⁶ George S., "Remember Me," *Trip Advisor Australia*, August 4 2012. Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g255060-d256721-r136154106-Sydney_Jewish_Museum-Sydney_New_South_Wales.html; For Sternfeld's survivor account see: George Sternfeld, *Chocolate to Anzac Biscuits* (Darlinghurst, Sydney: Sydney Jewish Museum, 2009).

²⁷ Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p. ix; See also: Milton and Nowinski, *In fitting Memory*.

²⁸ Judith Berman, "Australian Representations of the Holocaust: Jewish Holocaust Museums in Melbourne, Perth, and Sydney, 1984-1996," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13 (1999): 206-211. Evidencing this intentionalist reading of the Holocaust is the museums exhibition text, which asserts, "the ultimate goal of the Nazis was the extermination of European Jewry" ("Holocaust History," *Sydney Jewish Museum*, 148 Darlinghurst Road. Visited October 2, 2014). Similarly the text of the ghetto exhibition asserts that the decision to exterminate the Jews had already been

argues that the narrative of Holocaust memory at the SJM actively avoids a universalistic outlook, rejecting a framework of comparative genocide, or discussion of other Holocaust victims, due to the perception that such inclusion would threaten to “relativize the Holocaust and its uniqueness” for the Jewish community.²⁹ This is further reinforced by original curator Sylvia Rosenbaum, who states “The Holocaust must not be manipulated... One cannot use the Holocaust to tell other stories.”³⁰ Rather, as Berman notes, the driving narrative at the SJM is the personal narrative of survivor experience, with the museum envisaged primarily as a site to convey “the truth of the Holocaust”, “how it really was”, for the Holocaust survivor.³¹ It is therefore clear that the SJM holds a present intention to imbed a prosthetic memory of ‘how it was’ for the Jewish Holocaust survivor within the museum-goer via the curation of personal, emotional and empathetic interactions between museum-goer and survivor experience. Having established this intent of the SJM, it is now pertinent to consider the ways in which this intention specifically manifests within the museum through an examination of the production of prosthetic memory via the SJM’s curation, design and tour experience.

made by the early stages of the war, stating, “It is almost certain that the ghettos were not intended to become permanent living quarters, but rather way stations to the labour and extermination camps” (“Ghettos,” *Sydney Jewish Museum*, 148 Darlinghurst Road. Visited October 2, 2014). For a more detailed exposition of the intentionalist-structuralist debate see: Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1944).

²⁹ Berman, “Australian Representations of the Holocaust,” 209.

³⁰ Sylvia Rosenbaum, quoted in *Ibid*, 202.

³¹ *Ibid*, 215. See also Alba who states that the primary narrative of the SJM is “the survivor experience... [that] has therefore determined the SJM’s shape of memory”. Alba, “Integrity and Relevance,” 110.

Curation

One of the means through which the SJM seeks to promote and produce prosthetic memories of the Holocaust beyond the Jewish community is in its curation of personal artefacts from both Sydney Jewish survivors and Holocaust victims. As noted above, from the museum's inception it was the curatorial intention to imbue a humane quality to the displays of the museum, utilising object displays in addition to survivor testimony to engender a "human connection" to survivor experience, an intention that remains central to the current operations of the SJM.³² For, as Ari Lander, the current education officer at the SJM, states, "[p]hotographs in textbooks cannot 'bring to life' the history of the Holocaust in the same way artefacts can".³³ Importantly, and unusually for a Holocaust museum, apart from several newspaper articles and official documents, all museum artefacts at the SJM are of a personal nature, each object, (including yellow Magen Davids, concentration camp uniforms, blankets, spoons, combs, letters, ID cards, and various other donated items) being donated from within the Sydney Jewish community with an accompanying personal Holocaust testimony. Unlike the USHMM, there are no artefacts of Nazism or displays of Holocaust infrastructure (such as the boxcar), with the SJM seeking to emphasise throughout the personal narratives of a Jewish Holocaust experience.

This emphasis on the testimonial narrative of individual Holocaust survivors and victims throughout the museum presents the Holocaust to the museum-goer on an entirely personal level, presenting mundane objects which through their familiarity allow for powerful empathetic connections. As a result

³² Alba, "Integrity and Relevance," 110, 113.

³³ Ari Lander, "Museums and the place of empathy?" *Teaching History* 47 (2013): 51.

the personal objects that accompany the individual testimonies bring the testimonies to life and, as Landsberg argues, act to produce a memory based 'object empathy'.³⁴ Here, as discussed above, the presentation of a mundane object stimulates the museum-goer's mimetic faculty, where by the viewer comprehends the context of the object by means of its familiarity or 'likeness'.³⁵ Through this mimetic engagement a memory transfer can occur, as the museum-goer's own personal familiarity with an object provokes an empathy with the objects owner allowing them to imagine themselves into the objects accompanying testimony, gaining a prosthetic relationship with the Holocaust memory associated with the object.³⁶ Objects such as a blanket donated by Olga Horak, woven by inmates of Auschwitz from the hair of victims for the Auschwitz guards, achieve this memory based object empathy by bringing to life the reality of inmate experience through its very materiality and "seductive tangibility".³⁷ The object, made from human hair, not only testifies as evidence to the atrocities of the camps, but also through the familiarity of the object type, a blanket, invites the museum-goer to form an empathetic connection with Olga Horak's experience. The physicality of the object, as Landsberg argues, offers the museum-goer an illusion of unmediated proximity to the reality of the Holocaust, a proximity which invites the viewer to imagine themselves into Horak's accompanying testimony, thus forming a prosthetic memory of her experience.³⁸

Likewise in the "Children's Memorial" the museum-goer is confronted not with horrific imagery, but with the simple presence of mundane objects, objects

³⁴ Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory," 81-82.

³⁵ Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, p. 21.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 81-82.

³⁷ "Camps," *Sydney Jewish Museum*, 148 Darlinghurst Road. Visited October 2, 2014; Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory," 78.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 78.

that eerily testify to the absence of their owners, such as the toy car and leather school satchel of Victor Schwartz. Accompanying Victor's car and satchel is the exhibition text which tells of Victor's return from school one afternoon only to be told he was to be "taken on a journey", as a result the boy gave his prized car and satchel to his neighbour, asking them to take care of them until he returned.³⁹ Yet, Victor never returned, being killed along with his family at Auschwitz on 31 May 1944.⁴⁰ The toy car and school satchel, which have a loved, slightly worn, but un-aged appearance, could easily be your own, evoking a memory of one's own childhood schooling and toys. As a result of this familiarity, the object brings a reality to Victor's story, leading the museum-goer to imagine themselves into Victor's situation, simultaneously empathising with the boy whilst being confronted by his absence.

Via the human connection to Holocaust experience that the familiar and personal object provides, the museum-goer, through a mimetic and empathetic engagement, can form a prosthetic imagining of the Holocaust experience related in the accompanying exhibition text.⁴¹ Here it is clear that the SJM in its emphasis on presenting solely personal, 'human', artefacts donated from within the Sydney Jewish community, seeks to interact with the museum-goer in a way that brings the Holocaust to life in the minds of the viewer, promoting and producing prosthetic Holocaust memories within the broader Australian public.

³⁹ "Children's Memorial," *Sydney Jewish Museum*, 148 Darlinghurst Road. Visited October 2, 2014.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ As one museum-goer recalls on Trip Advisor Australia, "As you finish reading and experiencing one section and move to the next, you encounter personal stories and timelines that cement the story in a way that is experiential." tapestries, "Undiscovered Treasure," *Trip Advisor Australia*, December 2, 2012. Accessed October 25, 2014.

http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g255060-d256721-r146588017-Sydney_Jewish_Museum-Sydney_New_South_Wales.html.

Design

Central to Landsberg's application of the prosthetic memory paradigm to the Holocaust museum is the sensuous immersion of the museum-goer within the transferential and liminal museum space.⁴² As a museum designed to encourage a corporeal experience within its visitors, it is pertinent to now consider the spatial experience of the SJM in order to assess whether its architectural strategy plays a role in the sensuous emersion of the museum-goer, thus inviting them into an experiential relationship with events through which they did not live.⁴³ As noted above, the architect of the SJM intended its spaces to provide a corporeal experience for the museum-goer, inviting them, in conjunction with the museum's emphasis on survivor memory, to have a sensual engagement with the exhibition space. This intention is most evident in 'Mezzanine 2 – Ghettos' where the museum-goer's movement is directed and restricted. Much like the boardwalks of the USHMM, the visitor is forced to walk through the ghetto display in a manner evocative of the herding of the Jews into the crowded ghettos, being a "seemingly inexorable slow walk towards the camps".⁴⁴ This restricted passage is symbolically reinforced by Thomas Greguss's lifesized cement relief "Walking into the Ghetto", which confronts you as you walk by.⁴⁵ Once within the ghetto display one is immediately confronted by the eerie and claustrophobic, low lit space. The museum-goer's vision is obstructed by a series of false walls with window holes, through which the viewer can observe blown up black and white images of "Jews on their way to the ghetto" framed as though walking on the streets below, as if one is observing the foreboding event from

⁴² Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust and the Mass Culture of Memory," 66.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 66.

⁴⁴ "The Sydney Jewish Museum," 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 31.

the safety of a Warsaw apartment window.⁴⁶ Around the final corner of the ghetto display the museum-goer is presented with a rupture in the walls that restrict them, through which viewer confronted with an lifesized photograph of street scene: “child begging for food”.⁴⁷ Here, it is as if a door has been opened to the street only to view a starving Jewish child gazing intensely and reaching for help. As the architect Burés states, the ghetto section was intended to evoke a sensual and emotional engagement from the museum-goer with the space designed to “dramatise the exhibits; it’s almost over-cluttered so that it can look like a crowded ghetto; its depressing”.⁴⁸

Here, as in the USHMM, the museum-goer experiences what it may have ‘felt like’ to observe the Jews enter the ghettos, reliving the memory of the Jewish ghettoization through the strategic combination of sensual space and evocative image. As one visitor recalls on Trip Advisor Australia, “It is very daunting to relive what was like for all those folk brought misery from the war [sic]”.⁴⁹ Sociologist Celia Lury notes that the positioning of the museum-goer as witness dissolves the distance between the image and viewer inviting a “fantasy about the self”, or as Rowland Barthes states “the advent of myself as other”.⁵⁰ Here, like Weissman’s non-witness, the museum-goer imagines themselves into the

⁴⁶ “Ghettos,” *Sydney Jewish Museum*, 148 Darlinghurst Road. Visited October 2, 2014.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Michael Burés quoted in “The Sydney Jewish Museum,” 31.

⁴⁹ julkumari, “Interesting for all.,” *Trip Advisor Australia*, February 12, 2014. Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g255060-d256721-r193804141-Sydney_Jewish_Museum-Sydney_New_South_Wales.html. Whilst, ideally one would consult a museum’s guest book for the responses of museum-goers to a particular exhibition, the SJM does not provide such a guest book. Thus, for museum-goer responses to the experience of the SJM, this paper will refer to several reviews of the museum on Trip Advisor Australia. Whilst not a representative sample of the way the museum is experienced by museum-goers, statements from such reviews are useful insofar as they provide insight into the impact aspects of the museum-experience *can* have on the individual museum-goer, evidence that lends weight to the overall argument of this paper.

⁵⁰ Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 18, 76; Rowland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, (trans.) R. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 12.

event via the sensuous and experiential combination of image and space. Here a prosthetic memory of what it may have been like to observe the ghettoization of European Jewry is formed within the museum-goer via a sensual and emotional engagement with the constructed scenes. By positioning the museum-goer as a witness it is clear that the SJM seeks to imbed within them a prosthetic memory of what it may have been like to observe the Holocaust unfold, inviting them to answer for themselves the question of what they would have done to stop the slow march of the Jews and feed the hungry child.

Tour Experience

From the opening of the SJM the Holocaust survivor narrative was paramount, with the museum initiated, funded and staffed by survivors.⁵¹ As Alba states “from the outset, Survivor experience was dominant in developing and implementing the narrative and content of the museum space” underpinning its conveyance of Jewish memory.⁵² Whilst in recent years the involvement of Holocaust survivors from the Sydney Jewish community has lessened due to the ageing of the generation, first hand survivor interaction remains central to the museum’s programs, as it is still possible on several days of the week to be taken on a tour by a Holocaust survivor.⁵³ Moreover, on one Sunday every month, the SJM holds the “Remember Me” lectures, a series of talks by Sydney Jewish Holocaust Survivors. In addition to these first hand interactions with Holocaust survivors, the museum’s “Edith Linden Theatrette” plays a four-hour video loop of the survivor testimonies of SJM volunteers. This unique experience of first

⁵¹ Alba, “Integrity and Relevance,” 108.

⁵² Ibid, 110.

⁵³ Survivor tours are held on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday at 12pm.

hand survivor interaction and the presentation of oral testimony is, as Alba notes, central to the museum's ability to imbed a prosthetic memory of the Holocaust beyond the confines of the Jewish community.⁵⁴ As noted above, Weissman, suggests that this prosthetic memory transfer can occur via a non-witness' imaginative identification with the personal, oral testimony of survivor experience. Through the museum-goers desire to "be there" and feel what it was like, an imagined memory, or 'fantasy' of witnessing the Holocaust can be transferred from the survivor to the non-witness via an emotional exposure to personal, relatable Holocaust experiences which engender an empathetic engagement with the oral testimony. Thus, the centrality of first hand survivor experience to the SJM exhibition program provides opportunity for museum-goers to adopt a prosthetic memory of an experience that is not their own by imagining themselves into the situation related to them via the authentic survivor testimony.

As the museum-goer is taken around the exhibit by a survivor guide, the museum-goer cannot help imagining themselves into the vivid memories related to them, with the anecdotal descriptions of sight, sounds and smells granting a detail and emotional connection that no museum space, object or text can provide. The raw emotion of lived experience, particularly observable in the Edith-Linden theatre, implores the museum-goer to share the tears, laughter and at times fear expressed in the testimony, engendering an empathetic

⁵⁴ Alba, "Integrity and Relevance," 109. This is reinforced by Fiona Cameron's research at the Australian War Memorial which suggests a transformative museum experience occurs only by "engendering empathy to others points of view", with the museum-goer encouraged to see an event in the way another person saw the event. Fiona Cameron, "Beyond Surface Representations: Museums, "Edgy" Topics, Civic Responsibilities and Modes of Engagement," *Open Museum Journal* 8 (2006): 20. Accessed October 15, 2014. <http://hosting.collectionsaustralia.net/omj/vol8/cameron.html>.

identification with the survivors' memories. Evidencing this emotional and empathetic engagement with oral testimony at the SJM are the experiences of museum-goers posted to the website of Trip Advisor Australia. One museum-goer states, "When we visited, the guide was a survivor of a camp which brought the horror of it all so close,"⁵⁵ with another stating that the "re-telling makes the horrors almost come to life."⁵⁶ A third states "I heard guides giving excellent context and bringing the subject to life."⁵⁷ In these museum-goer accounts, the survivor testimony in particular engendered an 'experience' of the Holocaust, where by a museum-goer through their empathetic engagement formed a prosthetic memory of 'what it was like' for the Holocaust survivor. Here it is clear that through the centrality of the survivor to the tour experience the SJM seeks to promote and produce prosthetic memories of the Holocaust experience via the museum-goers emotional and empathetic exposure to Jewish Holocaust memory. Thus as Alba states, the SJM provides a liminal space in which the survivor testimony serves as the "interface between Jewish and non-Jewish communities... to make sense of one people's experience in the hearts and minds of others".

Conclusion

Museums are memory active sites in which a range of individual and collective memories are interacted with, having the potential to create prosthetic

⁵⁵ lolatraveller03, "A very stark reminder of the world's past," *Trip Advisor Australia*, June 10 2013. Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g255060-d256721-r163527606-Sydney_Jewish_Museum-Sydney_New_South_Wales.html.

⁵⁶ Taridzo C, "Touching first-hand stories," *Trip Advisor Australia*, July 29, 2013. Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g255060-d256721-r169531574-Sydney_Jewish_Museum-Sydney_New_South_Wales.html.

⁵⁷ BWUK, "Well presented and informative," *Trip Advisor Australia*, July 24, 2013. Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g255060-d256721-r168813972-Sydney_Jewish_Museum-Sydney_New_South_Wales.html.

memories in museum-goers who would not necessarily consider themselves to have any personal claim to the histories presented. Through this paper's examination it has become clear that like the USHMM, the SJM seeks to promote and produce a prosthetic memory of Jewish Holocaust experience through the curation of a series of interactions with, and experiences of, Jewish Holocaust memory. This is achieved via the cultivation of the museum-goers' sensual, emotional, and empathetic engagement with the curation of personal, familiar, objects; the design of sensual spatial experiences; and the tour experience of first hand survivor testimony. As Sylvia Rosenbaum envisioned, the SJM primarily stands, not as a curiosity cabinet, or museum of history, but as a house for Jewish memory, as site to perpetuate prosthetic Holocaust memory "simply, truthfully and honestly so that it would never happen again".⁵⁸ In seeking to promote and produce prosthetic memories of Holocaust experience within museum-goers the SJM affords a means of intergenerational and intercultural transmission of Holocaust memory, ensuring its longevity in the face of a dwindling survivor generation.

⁵⁸ Sylvia Rosenbaum, quoted in Berman, "Australian Representations of the Holocaust," 202.

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